



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers July 2, 2007

Latest Traffic Safety News

Traffic Safety Partners Urge Motorists To Drive Safely over Fourth of July

Undeterred by gas prices, many motorists will be on the road over the Fourth of July holiday. Law enforcement officers will be on patrol to enforce drunk driving, safety belt and work zone laws to keep everyone safe. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, AAA Mid-Atlantic and police officers urge drivers to use caution during the holiday week. In 2005, 280 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes over the Fourth of July period, making it one of the deadliest holidays that year.

Motorists celebrating Independence Day should remember that Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving and designate a sober driver before the festivities begin. They can ensure a safe holiday by planning ahead, calling a taxi or using public transportation, reporting drunk drivers to the police and arranging alternative transportation for drunk friends. To access the "Independence Day--the Deadliest Day on America's Roadways" and the "Summer Road Safety Tips go to:

<http://www.trafficsafety.org/julyfourth.pdf>

Vatican Outlines Guidelines for Drivers

The Vatican has issued its own rules for the road, encouraging drivers to help crash victims, pray for a safe trip and behave courteously. Under the "Ten Commandments" for drivers, motorists are warned against road rage, drunk driving and using vehicles for sinful purposes. The Vatican deemed the "Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of the Road" necessary because driving has become a big part of modern life. The document outlines the benefits of driving (family outings and seeing other cultures) while acknowledging the downsides (using cars to show off and dominating others by speeding). For more information and to view the "Ten Commandments", go to

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19308664/from/ET/> Source: The Associated Press, June 20, 2007

Air Bags Pose Greater Threat to Short and Tall People, Study Finds

Deployed air bags could be risky for shorter and taller people, according to a new study from Oregon Health & Science University. The authors gathered data on more than 60,000 drivers and front-seat passengers who were in crashes. Researchers concluded that air bags work for people of an average height—5'3" to 5'11"—but pose a risk to those shorter than 4'11" or taller than 6'3". Other experts question the study because it does not differentiate between the old and "smart" air bags that adjust for a person's weight and does not offer enough evidence that air bags could be dangerous for tall people. Source: Automotive Fleet, June 14, 2007

Senate Votes on 35 mpg Fuel Economy Standard for Cars, Pickup Trucks, SUVs

The Senate reached an agreement on average fuel economy, raising it to 35 miles per gallon for new cars, pickups and SUVs by 2020. Current standards for cars, 27.5 mpg, have not changed for almost two decades. For the first time, a single standard would apply SUVs and pickups, which now are required to meet a standard of 22.2 mpg. Automakers must also make sure half of their vehicles are capable of running on 85 percent ethanol by 2015. Removed from the energy bill is a requirement that automakers would have to increase the standard by 4 percent every year for 10 years after 2020.



United States Could Look to Australia for Recommendations to Improve Traffic Safety

The traffic safety environment in the United States differs from Australia's despite the country's similar geography and resources. The United States has a weak safety culture, whereas Australia has overcome barriers to reduce traffic fatalities. In the U.S., more than 40,000 people have died in each of the past 10 years. The government and the public seem to accept traffic fatalities as a byproduct of driving. Americans also think that traffic crashes are caused by the "other driver," and most drivers think their skills are above average. The traffic safety field is underfunded, and programs have relied more on educational campaigns than more-effective methods. Australia, however, has a stronger safety culture in part because of the government's willingness to intervene and enact laws that might not be popular with the media. Laws are accompanied by large amounts of enforcement and paid advertising and are based on a scientific approach. Conducting more research on the public's perceptions of traffic safety and what approaches work in countries such as Australia could help the U.S. improve its traffic safety culture.

Source: The Institute of Transportation Engineers, ITE Journal, June 27, 2007

Car Drivers Warned Not To 'Draft' Behind Tractor-Trailers

Drivers trying to increase fuel economy should avoid the dangerous practice of "drafting" truck drivers, says the American Trucking Associations. The industry trade group advises fleet safety directors to pass the word on to their drivers that the trend of tailgating trucks to reduce wind resistance is resurfacing. "Drafting" is unsafe, illegal and significantly increases the chances of injury and death," ATA President and CEO Bill Graves said. "This practice compromises the safety of everyone on the nation's highways and must not be considered a viable means of extending fuel mileage." Law enforcement officers are looking for drivers who try to save gas by "hypermiling"—driving partly on the shoulder, over-inflating tires and "drafting." For more information, go to

http://www.truckinginfo.com/news/news-detail.asp?news_id=58635&news_category_id=12

Source: Truckinginfo.com, June 8, 2007

Swedish Report Explores Attitudes of Convicted Drunk Drivers

VTI, the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, released a report about convicted drivers' thoughts about drunk driving and alcohol monitoring devices. The in-depth interviews are in Swedish with an English summary. For a copy of the report, go to

<http://www.vti.se/EPIBrowser/Publikationer%20-%20English/R553Eng.pdf>

Without a Law, Florida Tries to Reduce Aggressive Driving

Florida is using increased law enforcement and public information and education campaigns to crack down on road rage. No state law against road rage exists, and there is no consensus on a definition of the term. Florida tracks aggressive driving and found that in 2005, road rage was cited in 1,265 fatalities and 10,158 serious injuries. Families of road rage victims say the new campaign is not far-reaching enough and should include stiffer criminal penalties and guaranteed prosecution. "What humans do when they are driving, it defies the imagination," a spokesman for the Florida Highway Patrol said. "Unfortunately, we see it all the time."

Source: South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, June 10, 2007

Bad Drivers To Pay Extra Fees in Virginia

Virginians who are deemed bad drivers will have to pay additional fines annually for three years under new penalties that go into effect July 1. "I hope they will promote safety and reduce fatalities," Gov. Timothy M. Kaine said of the fees. The revenue raised will be used for transportation improvements across the state. The amount of the "civil remedial fees" varies based on the offense and target motorists with bad driving records or serious vehicle-related offenses. Only points received after July 1 will count, and the fees will not apply to out-of-state drivers. Source: Richmond Times-Dispatch, June 27, 2007



Paper Surveys Literature on Driving Simulators

Researchers and trainers of vehicle operators are using real-time driving simulators more and more. With a wide range of complexity available, validity is an important issue to consider. A 2006 technical report explores simulators' and simulation models' validity as found in the literature. The authors also present examples of different approaches to validating them.

Hoskins AM, El-Gindy M. Int J Heavy Vehicle Syst 2006; 13(3): 241-252.

Stanford Gets Junior Ready for the Big Race

Stanford University engineers are preparing their modified Volkswagen Passat, named Junior, for the 2007 Urban Challenge. Sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the competition pits researchers around the country against each other to come up with vehicles that can complete a 60-mile test with intersections, rights-of-way and traffic. Junior is fitted with sensors, cameras, global positioning satellite technology and laser range finders to help it navigate the track. Junior passed its first qualifying test when it completed three missions successfully but had a little trouble passing a car. The winners of the Nov. 3 competition will claim a \$2 million prize. For more information, go to <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-thegarage23jun23,1,5065903.story?coll=la-headlines-business> and http://news.com.com/Stanford+robot+passes+driving+test/2100-11394_3-6191180.html?tag=nefd.top Source: Los Angeles Times, June 23, 2007 and CNET News

New, Brighter Signs Make for Safer Driving

3M is creating material to make traffic signs easier to see. New technology, based on 100 percent efficient optics, led to "Diamond Grade" reflective sheeting that is adhered to traffic signs. By comparison, most optics for sign material is 65 percent efficient. A light beam hitting the new sheeting will reflect directly back to the source, appearing brightest to drivers. The material can be a replacement for most types of signs and is particularly effective in harder-to-see locations, such as overhead or on the far shoulder. Upgraded signs improve traffic safety and can be especially beneficial for the growing population of drivers ages 65 and up. For more information, go to www.3M.com

More Drivers are Using GPS over Maps When They Get Lost

Global positioning systems (GPS) are becoming more popular, and people are turning to them instead of road maps when they need directions. Older drivers who are not familiar with new roads also like the navigation systems. Motorists can opt for in-car systems, such as GM's OnStar, or portable units. GPS devices are not for just one type of driver—everyone from truck driver to business people to everyday commuters is using them. "They're a lot easier than reading a map," one salesman said. For more information, go to <http://www.crescent-news.com/news/article/2146062>

Source: Crescent-News, June 18, 2007

Report Examines Commercial Vehicle Driver Licensing in British Columbia

"Commercial Vehicle Driver Licensing Standards in British Columbia" offers recommendations for improvement in the province and elsewhere. The report explores the history, role of the government, current standards, proposed changes and international practices in regard to driver licensing and testing. For more information, go to

http://www.trafficinjuryresearch.com/publications/PDF_publications/Commercial_Vehicle_Driver_Licensing_Standards_in_BC.pdf

Report Explores Training for Commercial Motor Vehicle Operators

"Effectiveness of Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver Training Curricula and Delivery Methods" examines operator training in the trucking industry. The Transportation Research Boards' report looks at training programs that are using a combination of simulators and computer-based instruction. It also identifies



training effectiveness measures the commercial motor vehicle community uses. For more information, go to http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/ctbssp/ctbssp_syn_13.pdf

Small Cars Today Safer Than Small Cars of Past

"Small" doesn't mean "unsafe" anymore when it comes to vehicle safety. Small cars used to perform poorly in crash test and be involved in more traffic fatalities, but new technologies and improved design are maximizing safety. Stiff government regulations and consumer demand are making sure small, fuel-efficient vehicles are also safe. Today's small cars are heavier and larger than the small cars of the past, and some are earning "good" ratings in front and side crash tests.

Source: MSNBC, June 19, 2007

News from the USDOT

New Federal Program Will Tell Truckers Where They Can Stop To Rest

"SmartPark," a new program funded with \$1 million from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), is designed to help truckers fight fatigue. The FMCSA awarded contracts to two companies that will develop and test technology to give truckers real-time information on parking availability at truck and rest stops. Foster-Miller Inc. and VehicleSense Inc. will work on the first phase of the project; the second phase will involve evaluation of the new technology. FMCSA plans to release a report in the spring of 2008.

Group of Independent Drivers Objects to Opening Mexico Border to Commercial Trucks

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) failed the Department of Transportation for its plan to open the border to Mexican commercial trucks. OOIDA gave the "F" rating because the department has not detailed how trucks from Mexico will be subject to the same regulations as U.S. drivers. But Department of Transportation representatives defended the plan by saying, "The companies in this program are the most monitored on the road...The Mexican companies will have to comply with stricter rules than U.S. companies."

17 Congress Members Call for Higher Traffic Safety Standards

Bipartisan House of Representatives members sent a letter to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), asking for stronger safety standards regarding rollovers, ejection, roof strength and impact protection. The 17 Congress members who signed the letter want the rules to be addressed comprehensively instead of individually. "This letter clearly signals to the agency that Congress is watching and waiting for effective safety rules that will save lives and prevent disabling injuries," one traffic safety advocate said. More than 10,500 people die a year in rollover crashes, and NHTSA critics say the administration's proposed roof-strength rule would save only 13 to 44 lives a year.

NHTSA To Release Electronic Stability Control Rules Soon

NHTSA is expected to release proposed stability control rules that will require automotive manufacturers to include the technology on all new cars and will include testing standards. About 40 percent of new vehicles come standard with electronic stability control (ESC) now, and experts predict all vehicles will have it by 2010. Traffic fatalities could drop by 10,000 a year if all vehicles had ESC. NHTSA Administrator Nicole Nason said ESC "could be the greatest safety innovation since the safety belt."



Chinese Tires Recalled

Nearly 450,000 tires imported from China are being recalled because they are prone to tread separation and are missing strips that help hold the tire layers together. Foreign Tire Sales sold the Chinese-manufactured tires in the U.S. as far back as 2001 for use on pickups, SUVs and lighter trucks. The tires are blamed for a van crash where two people died last year. NHTSA is not accepting the company's claim that it cannot afford a national recall.

Work-Home

Latest IIHS Magazine Explores Teen Drivers

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's (IIHS) most recent Status Report magazine focuses on some good news about teenage drivers. For more information, go to <http://www.iihs.org/sr/pdfs/sr4207.pdf>

Report Focuses on Options for Non-Driving Seniors

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety released "Getting Around: Alternatives for Seniors Who No Longer Drive," which examines a pilot program to help older Southern California residents transition from driving. The program included transportation support and a public information and education campaign. For more information, go to <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/GettingAroundReport.pdf>

Utah Bill Would Let Family Members Report Unsafe Senior Drivers in Confidence

A Utah bill that would allow citizens to report anonymously a driver they deem dangerous died in the Senate earlier this year but is making a comeback. In May an 86-year-old driver ran down a father and daughter in a crosswalk, revitalizing support for the bill that is intended to help keep elderly drivers with diminished skills off the road. "I don't love the idea of ratting out your friends or your neighbors or your family," said Sen. Allen Christensen, the bill's sponsor. "But I like it a whole lot better than reading an obituary of a child." For more information, go to http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_6191980

Source: The Salt Lake Tribune, June 21, 2007

Senate Resolution Proposes a National Week for Teen Drivers

The third week in October could become National Teen Driver Safety Week. A bipartisan resolution introduced in Congress calls for the establishment of the week, which would increase awareness of teen driving issues. The resolution was referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. For more information, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:S.CON.RES.36>

New Mexico's Helmet Law Goes into Effect July 1

As of July 1, bike riders and skateboarders in New Mexico must wear helmets. The ambitious campaign attempts to put helmets on all children under 18 who ride on public property on bikes, skates, scooter, skateboards and even tricycles. Violators face a civil fine of \$10 that they will not have to pay if they buy a helmet. Advocates say the helmet law will put weight behind the fact that the safety devices significantly reduce the risk of brain damage. Officials expect teens to be the most resistant of the law, which some are saying is too intrusive. "I hope they know that no one is going to follow the rule, and no one's going to enforce the rule," a 15-year-old skateboarder said. Twenty other states have some form of helmet law, but New Mexico's is the most comprehensive.

Source: Associated Press, June 19, 2007



International Traffic Safety News

Web Site Lets Companies See How Their Fleet Safety Policies Measure Up

The Fleet Safety Benchmarking project in the United Kingdom polled 170 fleet managers and found that 35 percent of operators do not comply with all corporate and regulatory fleet safety requirements. Only 47 percent of companies have a written, signed safety policy; 44 percent schedule work and travel to prevent drowsy driving and speed limit compliance; 54 percent give new employees safety training; and 58 percent have a system to maintain driver records.

Report Reveals U.K. Drivers' Attitudes about Traffic Safety

After asking more than 2,000 United Kingdom motorists, the RAC's Report on Motoring 2007 found that more than half think Britain's roads are less safe now. More than half of the respondents want a 50 percent reduction in traffic fatalities. The report also found that motorists are interested in environmentally friendly cars but are slow to act; about a third believe traffic enforcement is more about revenue than safety; a majority want stiffer penalties for drunk and drugged driving; and while speeding is the most common offense, about half admitted they do it sometimes.

Source: FleetNewsNet, June 12 and 18, 2007

Australian State To Employ GPS To Slow Down Speeding Drivers

Victoria's Transport Accident Commission soon will start a trial program using global position satellites (GPS) to slow down the Australian state's speeders. Fifty cars and trucks will receive a GPS unit that will detect when the vehicle is speeding and advise the driver to slow down. A road safety manager said the technology could reduce traffic fatalities by 15 percent. Some in Australia's trucking industry are concerned the method could go from warning the driver to actually applying the brakes to reduce the vehicle's speed. "Any third party interference with the driving on-road performance of a motor vehicle would worry us considerably, and we would need to see what is actually proposed," the CEO of the Australian Trucking Association said. For more information, go to

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s1950224.htm> Source: The World Today, June 13, 2007

Mercedes-Benz Turns Safety Focus to Preventing Crashes with New Technology

Mercedes-Benz plans to focus on crash avoidance technologies by fitting vehicles with stereo cameras and radar sensors that monitor the area around the vehicle. The systems will warn drivers of potential problems or intervene in cases of imminent danger. The safety systems are based on traffic safety research and will try to reduce problems drivers face at intersection, sharp curves and constructions sites by addressing fatigue, speed and lane departure. One video-based system will "read" traffic signs and display them on a screen in the vehicle's cockpit. Lane assistance warns drivers through vibrations in the steering wheel when they are about to veer off the road. Sensors detect blind spots drivers can't see and monitor for signs of driver fatigue. Mercedes-Benz also is working on car-to-car communications, so one vehicle can warn another about a trouble spot ahead. For more information, go to <http://www.edmunds.com/insideline/do/News/articleId=121276>

British Radio Companies Push for 2015 Deadline to End AM/FM Signals

Radio companies in the United Kingdom are calling for a shutdown of FM and AM radio signals by 2015. The move will push people into keeping up with the latest digital radio or Internet technology. With digital radio sets, listeners can pause and rewind live audio and get traffic and news alerts as text messages on a built-in screen. Radio companies are spending £20m a year on these services and need to show shareholders an end is in sight for terrestrial radio. Currently only 16 percent of radio listening is done digitally. For more information, go to

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/main.jhtml?xml=/money/2007/06/24/cnradio124.xml>



Source: Sunday Telegraph, June 24, 2007

Australian Report Investigates Relationship of Vehicle Color, Crash Risk

A report released by the Monash University Accident Research Center examines crash risk in relation to vehicle color. It analyzes crash data from two Australian states. For more information, go to <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/reports/muarc263.html>

Electronic Stability Control Offers Fleet Managers Safety, Cost Benefits

Because electronic stability control (ESC) can reduce the chances of a fatal crash by 25 percent, the Enhanced Safety of Vehicles Conference urges fleets to fit all vehicles with ESC. ACFO, a fleet managers association, agrees that ESC can reduce risk but cautions against drivers thinking the technology will save them no matter how fast they drive. Besides safety benefits, ESC will save fleets "bent metal" costs and lead to savings in insurance premiums. Source: FleetNewsNet, June 28, 2007